

RICAT Minutes
Office of Rehabilitation Services
40 Fountain Street ~ Providence, RI 02903

August 11, 2005

- Welcome: Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Panarace at 2:35 p.m.
- Members present: John Benevides, Margaret Hoyer, Richard Gaffney, Pat Feeley, Ron Racine, Ying Sun, Bob Perrello, Kerri Cicione, Emily Lennon, Jill Waller, Ed Zuromski
- ATAP Partners: Lezlee Shaffer, Beverly Andrade, Regina Connor – ATAP Program Director
- Guest: Anne Mulready
- Acceptance of Minutes: Pat F., made motion, Richard G. seconded motion to accept minutes. Motion was unanimously approved.
- Chairperson's Report: Chair Panarace stated this is a very busy month. She sent out a letter of support for ATAP requesting that the Senate fully fund the program. Joe Murphy was the only member who responded. The letter closely followed the model given by national ATAP (copy handed out). Chair Panarace established an ad hoc committee to help with the development of the section of the state plan that pertains to RICAT. There will be a meeting next week on August 16th at 2:30 p.m. in the small conference room at ORS to give additional input on the state plan and decide upon 2 or 3 specific activities for each committee of the Council.
- Committee Reports:
 - Communications - Ron reported in Joe's absence. The Committee still hasn't gotten any feedback on the website yet. They are asking what people want to see on the website. Pat F. said that it is difficult to maneuver the discussion board portion and asked if Yahoo could be used instead. Ron stated Harry had mentioned that as well. Ron suggested that at the next meeting, a projector be hooked in to show a sample of how the discussion board works. Speakers Bureau – Jeanne and Margaret both volunteered to be on it. Members asked if there could be a script for presentations. Pat asked if there could be a list made up of groups that might be interested in having a presentation done, so that people could sign up for those with which they would be more familiar. Ron commented that there has not been a lot of outreach done yet. Ying has done some from the URI speakers' bureau, but there have been no requests recently. Ying stated he has been asked to speak at the URI donor recognition luncheon on September 17th at the URI Ryan Center. He will talk about the AT program. Jeanne added that Ying should tape the next URI football game with closed captioning to show how accessibility works. Jeanne stated Kathleen did a presentation at an assisted living conference. Jeanne also stated that the man who coordinates assisted living facilities through the Dept of Health was very open to having a curriculum related to AT that would be incorporated into the licensing procedure for Assisted Living. There is now a \$1,300 fee to be certified by the health department as assisted living managers or administrators. Regina commented this

could be a collaborative activity for the ATAP partners and the council. Jeanne will see what other information she could get.

- Legislative - Bob commented there was not much on the legislative front, and that it is busy mostly at budget time. Chair Panarace stated that she received an update from the Commission on Deaf and Hard of Hearing regarding a hearing aid bill that had passed. Effective Jan 1st, \$400 per hearing aid is allowed through insurance every 3 years. The biggest legislative question is the federal AT funding. Regina commented we are still waiting for Congress to approve the budget for 2006 which would fund FY 2007. Available dollars for this upcoming fiscal year beginning October 1st are \$301,520. Richard added that Congress is still working on the rehabilitation act. A large number of consumers and other interested individuals had attended a rally in Washington, including representatives from the National Federation of the Blind of Rhode Island (NFB of RI) protesting the reorganization of RSA. Regina stated that as part of the reorganization, the regional offices will be closing by September 30th. The staff of the Regional offices provide technical assistance to the state vocational rehabilitation programs. For the AT programs, there is, currently, only one program specialist who oversees all these programs. Margaret asked where the VR program specialists would be located. Regina responded all technical assistance and monitoring activities would be conducted from Washington.
- Membership/Outreach – Pat asked about the status of recruiting new RICAT members from the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) consumer group. She added that the TBI act was passed in 2005 and there is a tremendous amount of dollars available. She has seen Joe M. at their annual meeting but no-one from RICAT. She asked if they (TBI) can be invited to sit in on RICAT meetings. Jill responded that the Membership Committee was in the process of accepting applications and interviewing; and then move forward with contacting other organizations. Jill will contact Sharon Brinkworth from the Brain Injury Association. Emily circulated information regarding the four applicants for the Council. There are three open positions. Currently, 44% of Council membership is consumers, and to get to the 51% consumers, all three vacancies must be filled by consumers. Jill stated one person dropped out due to personal reasons. She then read all 4 candidates' brief summaries. Kim is a consumer; Lora is not a consumer; Kevin is a consumer; and Brian is not a consumer. The committees' two recommendations are Kim Wennermark and Kevin Cronin because they are consumers with a strong interest in working with the Council. Regina added that if there are committees in which the other applicants are interested, they can be invited to participate on that level. Jill responded they tell all applicants that, and all did say yes they would like to do that if not selected. Also they can come to meetings as non-voting participants. Regina commented with these 2 if approved, it will bring up to 48%. Jill made motion to recommend Kim Wennermark and Kevin Cronin to be approved for the council; motion was seconded by Margaret. Motion was unanimously approved. Next steps: Jill will call TBI; Beverly has also posted the need for members on the TechACCESS website; and Lezlee stated it is in OSCIL's newsletter. Jill will also contact School for the Deaf, Insight and MS Society.
- Alternative Financing Committee – Chair Panarace stated this committee is supporting a feasibility study. Regina added that the AT Act requires that the state address 4 new initiatives, including a state financing system. State financing system – As part of the process, a state can, in the first year, conduct a state feasibility study to determine need, and type of financing system that would be most appropriate. ATAP wants the Council to participate in the feasibility study. Pat asked if there is a budget for that. Regina

answered that she has not determined all the budget figures yet. Pat commented that might be something a market research firm that have done these kinds of needs assessments could do so there would be no skewing of the numbers. John B. responded that the committee will look at all options and come back to council with their findings. Adding that there are a lot of other approaches to consider as well.

- **Project Director's Report:** At RICAT's last meeting Regina was heading to Washington for a meeting on how to prepare the AT State Plan. Even after that it has been incredibly daunting task. The AT State Plan is due by August 26th, and it is evident that all states are finding it quite challenging. Plans will need to be amended as certain information is not available at this time; however a draft has been written. One attachment in particular, Attachment 4 – projections on increased access and increased acquisition – need to establish a baseline and RSA needs to develop an instrument for data collecting. After the first year of the Plan, using the data collection tool developed by RSA, states will need to amend their Plans to indicate their measurable goals related to increased access and increased acquisition. Also Regina stated that in Attachment 3 she had indicated there were 4 vacancies on RICAT which was incorrect and she will change. Regina also commented that in the law, RICAT membership needs to have a member from the Workforce Investment Board. When that individual is appointed, that info will be in the amended plan. Attachment 1 – cover sheet. Attachment 2 describes the Lead Agency (ORS) and how they will provide support to the program. Jeanne added the ad hoc committee has a lot of homework to do reviewing the draft State Plan, and comments from any member are welcome. Regina stated members should filter all comments to Chair Panarace, then when the ad hoc committee meets, she can sit in and changes can be made at that time. Chair Panarace stated that next week at the sub-committee meeting, RICAT could list some specific activities they would like to do (e.g. Communications might have 4 speaking engagements for the year. Chair Panarace asked if this was the first time states were required to write a plan. Regina responded it was, and that is why this has been such a process. It is new for all state programs. Also, this is the first time the RSA has oversight of all AT programs, because in prior years it was overseen by NIDRR. Attachment 6 – Regina stated that states would be required to complete Attachment 6 if they did not need to establish or expand one or more of the state level activities (state financing system, device reutilization program, device loan program, device demonstration program. A state would need to determine that a program already exists and is funded with state dollars, and, therefore, the AT program did not need to duplicate it. Rhode Island has decided to work on all four required activities.

- **ATAP Partners Report:**

OSCIL – Lezlee announced they have a new ATAP coordinator who is a certified OT assistant – Darlene Shuchemnia. Lezlee said they will definitely be putting her skills to work! Darlene is coming from the Pawtucket School Department, and she has also been involved in nursing home transition when she helped her father transition back to his own place. Lezlee added they are also starting to get referrals for fall presentations such as at the Pilgrim Senior Center on safety in the home where they will incorporate AT in their presentations. The Senior Health Center in West Warwick also asked them to come in and do an AT display. OSCIL will be receiving new money for the smoke detector program – Shake Awake – which has been accumulating a waitlist over the last several months. Now the units can be installed. OSCIL's newsletter was published early and it has different articles in it relating to AT including Newsline; and also the membership recruitment notice for RICAT.

TechACCESS – Beverly stated that the next project is the annual ATAP AT conference which will be held on Thursday, November 17th. This year's program is a really exciting program with a strong VR presence because Ron and Joe were both on the committee. Beverly asked everyone to keep their eyes open for the registration brochure.

RIDLC – Anne stated that the RIDLC is no longer a partner of ATAP. RIDLC also receives funds from RSA to do advocacy related to the acquisition of AT. RIDLC still wants to be in contact with RICAT and ATAP. Liz Hubbard should be back from leave in September and will be attending RICAT meetings. Liz had started a nursing home outreach program to educate people about the availability of AT. Anne stated that they hope to resume the outreach activities in September. Regina added Liz will continue to represent RIDLC on RICAT.

EBEC – Regina commented that Lisa will be focusing some of her activities on parent training groups, and transition activities. ATAP needs to demonstrate that 5% of funds are being dedicated to transition – both students with disabilities and transition to community living, a focus of OSCIL.

- Roundtable

Chair Panarace announced that the RI Relay Service is having a town hall meeting on August 24th from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. at TechACCESS. Jeanne described her frustrations with the Relay services, as not all individuals are comfortable with the somewhat lengthy process of communication.

Chair Panarace asked Beverly about the Department of Elderly Affairs' One Stop Resource Center. Chair Panarace stated RICAT should do some fact finding, and she feels that AT should definitely be part of the Center. Bev stated TechACCESS is listed in their guide (DEA).

Richard – discussed new technology. He attended the national convention of the National Federation of the Blind in Louisville and saw the new voting equipment, which he believes Rhode Island has selected - Automark, which is put out by ES&S. It allows a person to skip from one race to another without going through all the candidates, then review the ballot, and after the person finishes, it prints out a paper ballot. A series of dots prints out so people can't tell for whom the person voted. Then that paper ballot is inserted into the scanner. Richard stated there will be a demonstration of this model at the end of the month, and the Secretary of State's office wants to get it implemented by next January. Regina asked Richard to keep everyone informed.

Bob – added that he is on the canvassing board and they have a non-partisan team that goes to people's home to help them vote. Richard and Margaret both agreed and said they preferred to be independent and go vote at the polls.

- Next Meeting Date: October 20, 2005
- Adjournment: Motion was made by Richard G. and seconded by Jill W. that the meeting be adjourned. Motion was unanimously approved, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.